

# APPENDIX



# **APPENDIX A - THE RIVERSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD; AN OVERVIEW**

- **1900 to 1931** Harvard River Houses (land acquisition; construction)
- **1910** Charles River Dam constructed
- **1930 to 1971** De-industrialization
- **1953** Putnam Gardens constructed
- **1963** Peabody Terrace constructed
- **1967** Mather House constructed

**The Coast.** During the period from approximately 1910 to 1960 Riverside had a particularly small-scale, livable, residential character. The Charles River Park had been completed from what is today John F. Kennedy Street (JFK) to Western Avenue in 1908. After the Charles River Dam was finished in 1910 the riverbanks to the west were no longer subject to tidal changes in water level. Industrial uses were gradually disappearing. Residents of Riverside used the Charles River Park as a neighborhood park and Riverside itself was known as "The Coast". (See Figure A.2: Riverside ca. 1960.)

#### **Neighborhood-University Interface.**

Harvard buildings in Riverside, with minor exceptions, are residential buildings. Their impact on the neighborhood varies according to their location and design. The first group to be built, the Harvard River Houses completed in 1931, were attractively designed and scaled and replaced industrial uses. Because of their location at the northeast corner of the neighborhood adjacent to Harvard Square, the early River Houses did not have as much impact on the Residential Core as the later modern dormitories. The 1960s era high-rise dorms were located between the existing low-scaled Residential Core and the river. Like the earlier housing complexes, the towers and their lower accessory structures face inward to enclosed landscaped courts. (See Figure A.3: Peabody Terrace.)

Later, the architects of Harvard's DeWolfe



*Figure A.1 Riverside Press at Charles River*



*Figure A.2 Riverside, ca. 1960*



*Figure A.3 Peabody Terrace*

Street Housing utilized a design that is essentially lower in scale and oriented to the street. Although some still regard this development as too large, it is more neighborhood friendly in scale than its 1960s-era high-rise predecessors. (See Figure A.4: DeWolfe Street Housing.) De Wolfe was originally intended to house graduate students. Recently, howev-

er, because of a shortage of undergraduate housing, Harvard has been placing undergraduates in DeWolfe.

Several small existing Harvard-owned houses in the Banks, Grant, Athens Cowperthwaite area have recently been renovated for Harvard affiliate housing. Because of their small-scale and traditional style, and the fact that they will be occupied by Harvard affiliates rather than undergraduates, these reuse projects have not been controversial.

Harvard University recently made public its ownership of 260 acres on the west side of the Charles River in Allston. The overall size of this property is roughly equivalent to the existing Cambridge campus. Most of Harvard's Allston properties are either vacant or candidates for redevelopment.

**Commercial Areas.** Large - scale commercial areas in and adjacent to the Riverside Neighborhood include Harvard Square, the Mass. Ave. Corridor, Central Square and the new neighborhood shopping center across River Street in Cambridgeport. There are also scattered small-scale retail businesses along River Street and Western Avenue.

In its clientele and types of shops, Harvard Square functions as much as a regional destination as a local commercial center. Because it abuts Harvard housing, activities in Harvard Square do not directly affect the Riverside Residential Core. Two buildings have recently been constructed in the Riverside portion of Harvard Square: One Bow Street and the Omni Travel Building. The new Inn at Harvard is located at the edge of Riverside. All three buildings are relatively small in size and scale and have minimum visual impact in the Riverside Neighborhood.

A major redevelopment site exists at Zero Arrow Street near its intersection with Massachusetts Avenue. The site, which connects Arrow Street to Mt. Auburn Street,



*Figure A.4 Dewolfe Street Housing*



*Figure A.5 Mass. Ave. Corridor*

was proposed to be constructed as a commercial development. However, the current proposal is for an arts and non-profit complex, including a 350 seat theater, associated rehearsal rooms and office space.

Buildings in the Mass. Ave. Corridor are a mix of one-story commercial structures, small frame structures and large masonry blocks. (See Figure A.5: Mass. Ave. Corridor.) There is a significant change in elevation between Mass. Ave. and Green Street to the west. This slope, which marks the line of the original salt marsh, provides a natural separation between the commercial activities on Mass. Ave. and the predominantly residential uses on Green Street. There has been no significant new construction in the Mass. Ave. Corridor since 1992.

Central Square, a portion of which is includ-

ed in the Study Area, has undergone a significant transformation since the 1992 study. The Holmes Building, a six-story apartment building with ground floor retail was recently constructed on the corner of Mass. Ave. and Magazine Street, replacing a group of two- and three-story commercial buildings. (See Figure A.6: Holmes Building in Central Square.) The City's Facade Improvement Program has resulted in new façade treatments in the square. Recent streetscape improvements along Mass. Ave. include new street and pedestrian lights; sidewalk paving; curb extensions at crosswalks; trees and street furniture. (See Figure A.7: Streetscape Improvements in Central Square.)

The Bread and Circus supermarket and Osco Drug Store on River Street adjacent to Riverside introduced new neighborhood services to the community. The Bread and Circus building includes a ground floor cafe on Putnam Street. These stores are within walking distance of the Riverside Residential Core (maximum 15 minutes). (See Figure A.8: Retail area on River Street.)

Other than the new neighborhood shopping center, commercial uses on River Street and Western Avenue are primarily small-scale “mom-and-pop” establishments. Recent construction and rehabilitation projects on these streets have been residential. (See Figure A.9: Typical “mom-and-pop” store in Riverside.)

**Parks/Community Facilities.** Riverside's three major city parks - Corporal Burns, Riverside Press and Hoyt Field - are well equipped, well maintained and intensively used. These parks provide facilities for a wide range of activities: basketball, softball, tennis, street hockey, and water play. They also include playgrounds, tot lots and areas for passive recreation. (See Figure A.10: Corporal Burns Park.) The Martin Luther King School playground has recently been renovated and will double as a neighborhood park. There are three small green spaces in Riverside: Franklin Street Park, Sullivan Park



*Figure A.6 Holmes Building in Central Square*



*Figure A.7 Streetscape improvements in Central Sq.*



*Figure A.8 Retail area on River Street*

on Green Street, and an ornamental triangular park on Western Avenue. Quincy Square, a new small passive park on Mass. Ave. near Harvard Square, lies just outside the neighborhood. The 1992 study recommended redesign and reconstruction of Franklin Street Park and this recommendation is just being implemented. The Riverside neighbor-



hood also enjoys use of the MDC's Charles River Park along the community's entire western riverfront edge.

The Moore Youth Center is located in Hoyt Field. A private institution, the Cambridge Community Center on Calender Street, also serves Riverside youth.

**Socio-Economic Factors.** For the many people who appreciate the advantages of urban living, Riverside is ideally located. It is within walking distance of Harvard University, Harvard Square and Central Square. Its northern portion is also easily accessible by public transit to downtown Boston and its many cultural institutions.

Real estate prices and rent levels have significantly risen in Riverside, along with the rest of the metropolitan area. Recently constructed residential units are typically clustered luxury condominiums that sell for a half million each, or more. (See Figure A.11: Recent condo development in Riverside.) Potential homeowners and renters with limited income find it difficult to find housing in Riverside.

Phasing out of the rent control ordinance in 1994 contributed significantly to the loss of affordable housing in Riverside. According to the 1992 Riverside Neighborhood Study, 1826 of the total 3232 housing units in Riverside were rent control units. Rent-control-level rents were phased out over a two-year period.

The City of Cambridge has an aggressive affordable housing program. Units are added by two basic means: inclusionary zoning and grants. Housing developments of ten units or more are required to provide 15 % affordable units. Grants provide gap financing to developers of affordable housing. These tools are gradually adding affordable units, but the net number in Riverside does not replace the affordable rent control units that have been lost.



*Figure A.9 Typical mom-and-pop store in Riverside*



*Figure A.10 Corporal Burns Park*



*Figure A.11 Recent condo development in Riverside*

